

and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6965 of December 13, 1996

Wright Brothers Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Ninety-three years ago, on a windswept North Carolina beach, air travel by hot air balloon and gliders gave way to American ingenuity and the era of powered flight. Wilbur and Orville Wright—employing innovations like the wind tunnel and single component testing—designed, built, and ultimately flew the first powered, heavier-than-air craft on the dunes of Kitty Hawk. Years later, Wilbur was to say of this historic event, "It is the complexity of the flying problem that makes it so difficult. It is not . . . solved by stumbling upon a secret, but by the patient accumulation of information upon a hundred different points." No longer would the ability to travel by air be bounded by the simple physics of wind and weather, but by the power of the human imagination.

As we have expanded the scope of our dreams, our love of flight has extended our command of the sky. Today, air travel is not only the fastest means of transportation, but the safest as well, and the United States air transportation system, which continues to improve every year, serves as the model to which all others are compared.

My Administration continues to work to make the skies ever safer. Integral to this effort has been the dedicated service of thousands of men and women throughout the air transportation community who strive daily to protect air travelers. Indeed, this month, the Vice President and I were pleased to announce that the major airlines have agreed to install fire detection systems in the cargo holds of some 3,700 airliners that carry the vast majority of Americans flying each year. We cannot make the world risk free, but we can reduce the risks we face. Working together, we have taken another important step to ensure the safety of the flying public.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Federal aid for our Nation's airports. Working in partnership with State and local governments, private airport operators, and the air carrier and general aviation communities, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assisted numerous airports with critical safety, security, and capacity projects that directly benefit the American traveling public. It is particularly fitting, as Americans celebrate an important milestone in the history of air transportation, that this year also marks the beginning of important reforms for the FAA that recognize its vital role in advancing sound aviation management and development in the United States and around the world.

On April 1, 1996, the FAA began transforming itself from the model previously mandated by law into a more effective, streamlined system, better designed for the challenges of the twenty-first century. In the re-

cently enacted Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996, the Congress, working with my Administration, complemented those important reforms with a new financial model for the agency to help it meet the safety and capacity challenges it faces. This legislation also provided the FAA with improved tools to perform its mission more effectively. It builds on security recommendations of the Vice President's Commission on Aviation Safety and Security that will improve the FAA's ability to more comprehensively address the threat posed by terrorists to civil air transportation. With these statutory improvements, the world of aviation will be an exciting one in which future aviation pioneers may fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 1996, as Wright Brothers Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6966 of January 16, 1997

Religious Freedom Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every day, in neighborhoods and communities across our Nation, Americans come together to worship and to reaffirm their most deeply held spiritual values. Our right to worship freely—each in our own way—is essential to our well-being. Religious Freedom Day offers us an invaluable opportunity to reflect on this precious human right and to give thanks for its protection in our Nation.

Freedom from religious persecution was of such profound importance to our founders that they placed it first among the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. History has proved the wisdom of that decision. America's commitment to religious tolerance has empowered us to achieve an atmosphere of understanding, trust, and respect in a society of diverse cultures and religious traditions. And today, much of the world still looks to the United States as the champion of religious liberty.

Yet, even in America, we must be ever vigilant in protecting the freedoms so important to our ancestors and so admired by people throughout the world. The church arsons and the desecration of synagogues and mosques in recent years demonstrated for us all that our country is not entirely free from violence and religious hatred. My Administra-